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The Story of Joan of Arc

The Witch—Saint

M. M. MANGASARIAN

LECTURER
OF THE
INDEPENDENT RELIGIOUS SOCIETY

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Joan of Arc

This lecture on Joan of Arc, delivered some time ago, provoked a great deal of criticism in Chicago. The people who protested against it and wanted to punish its author were, naturally enough, the Roman Catholics. What interests me in Joan of Arc is not the fact that the story of her martyrdom and subsequent canonization could be used as a weapon against the Church of Rome, but because the story in itself is so very compelling. It is quite true that the story also illustrates how far from infallible the Catholic Church has been in its dealings with the Maid of Orleans—first, burning her at the stake as a witch, and, five hundred years later, beatifying her as a saint. The statement in my lecture which caused the greatest displeasure was to the effect that the same church which had burnt Joan of Arc as a witch in fourteen hundred thirty-one had sainted her in nineteen hundred and nine. The Catholics deny that they were at all responsible for the terrible death of the deliverer of

France. This lecture will throw some light on that question.

As related in a former lecture, it was at her shrine, in the Church of the Sacred Heart, in Paris, last summer, that I promised myself the task of presenting to the American people the truth about Joan of Arc. I shall speak very plainly in this lecture, but, I am sure, without any trace of bitterness in my heart toward anyone. I shall speak with feeling, of course, for it is impossible not to be moved to the depths by the events which brought a girl of nineteen to the stake—but my passion is free from anger or prejudice. I can weep for this young woman without gnashing my teeth on her fanatical persecutors. I am sure I can tell the truth without lying about the Catholic Church.

But I do not wish to be sentimental, either. I have not forgiven the unrepentant destroyers of the innocent. To convert a heretic into a saint by trying to prove that she was not a heretic at all is not repentance; it is sophistry. To deny that Joan suffered death at the hands of, and by the authority of, the Vicar of Christ on earth is not a sign of regret for the past, but a defiance of history. When the Catholics shall admit that, through ignorance, and urged on by circumstances they could not control, they committed the act which they have since atoned for by offering her a heavenly crown—when, I say, the Catholics shall shed over her body tears as genuine as those which black Othello shed

over the woman he had smothered—then we will forgive them.

But the Catholic Church will have to choose between securing our forgiveness and retaining her infallibility. If she should repent of a single act ever committed by her officially, she would lose her claim to infallibility—for how can the infallible err? If, on the other hand, she should hold to her infallibility, how can she be sorry for anything she has ever done? If I had any influence with the Catholics I would advise them to sacrifice infallibility for the respect of humanity. It is much more divine to say, "I am sorry," than to say, "I am infallible." But the Catholic Church will not take my advice.

The shrine of Joan in the Paris church is almost as eloquent as her stake in Rouen. I have seen them both—that is to say, I have seen the spot on which she was consumed, marked by a white slab; and I have seen the marble figure of Joan, as a girl, in the attitude of prayer, now in the Church of the Sacred Heart in Paris. As I stood at her shrine in this great white church it seemed to me that, even though Joan of Arc has at last been made a saint, there was still a prejudice against her on the part of the people, as well as of the priests. This is only an impression, and I hope I am mistaken. But let me present the evidence on which I base my misgivings: In the first place, Joan is not given the

preference in the shrine set apart for her. St. Michael, whoever he might be, occupies the whole front of the altar, and only on the windows and the side walls do we find any mention of Joan and the events of her heroic career. There is also, at one end of the enclosure, as intimated before, a small marble figure of Joan on her knees. Why does St. Michael usurp the place of honor over the altar? Who is he? What has he done for France? In the second place, there was not a single lighted candle at her shrine. St. Mary's altar, a little distance off, was ablaze. St. Joseph's, too, was honored by lighted candles. But no one was on her knees and no flame twinkled before the sainted Joan of Arc. They say that it is almost impossible to outlive the charge of heresy. In former times, quite frequently, even heretics who repented of their heresies were put to death, nevertheless. To have ever been accused, even, or suspected of heresy, is an unpardonable crime. Joan was suspected, at least, of rebellion against Rome, and it seemed to me, as I reflected upon what I observed in the church, that the Catholics had canonized this village maid reluctantly, and only under pressure, and after five hundred years of dilly-dallying.

But before I left the Church of the Sacred Heart there was a lighted candle upon her altar. I lighted it. Approaching one of the candle tables, of which there are half a

dozen in the building, I purchased a long, tapering candle, white as the lily, and I touched it with fire—I kindled it and set it in one of the sockets to burn before the kneeling Joan. I left my flaming candle in the Church of the Sacred Heart! I, a non-Catholic, offered my fire to Joan, not because she had been canonized—for I never wait for the consent or the approval of the Pope before paying homage to anybody—but because her sweet, sad story is one of the most moving of modern times, and her vindication one of the most stupendous conquests of modern thought.

The Church of the Sacred Heart is one of the most beautiful in Paris. It is built on the highest point in the city and commands a wonderful view. As I have told you before, I have two friends who dwell on this summit—really, a superb location. It is approached by a long flight of stairs, or by a cog-wheel train. Before it, and all around it, sweeps the Paris of to-day, as did the Paris of Clovis and Charlemagne, nearly fifteen hundred years ago; the Paris of Julian, Emperor of Rome, older still; the Catholic Paris, when kings and parlements bowed low to kiss the great toe of the Italian Christ, or his vicar; the Paris of the Medici—red and bloody; the Paris of the Huguenots, of Henry of Navarre, of Conde and Colligny—sad, desolate, and in the throes of a new faith; and the Paris of the philosophers, whose smile softened its barbarities, lit up its darkness, and

made it a city of light—*La ville Lumiere!* There, on that splendid elevation, live my two young friends. They are both at the age of nineteen. One of them a lad, the other a maid. The girl is housed; the boy is exposed. Joan of Arc lives in the church—the cathedral is her home. The Chevalier de La Barre stands on the edge of the hill, with sun and shower falling upon his head. The Catholic Church burnt them both at the stake—the boy and the girl; the one because he did not tip his hat to the priest at a street procession, the other because she believed in herself! But modern thought has vindicated both of these outcasts. Joan now dwells in a white church, perfumed and lighted; and the Chevalier crowns the brow of the hill with his youthful figure and appealing gesture. The chain which tied these children to the stake in a dark age has flowered! Is not that wonderful? I believe in the forces, the ideas, the movement—the thought that can cause a chain to flower!

I am not going to speak this morning of the Chevalier de La Barre, to commemorate whose memory the Rationalists of France have erected this monument, close to the Church of the Sacred Heart. He will be my theme on another occasion. In this lecture I shall confine myself to the story of Joan of Arc. And a strange story it is! A young girl of seventeen marches at the head of a dilapidated and demoralized army, and leads it on to victory against

the best fighters of the world, the English, who, in the fifteenth century, were trying to annex France to England; she is captured by traitors, sold to the enemy for ten thousand pounds; and then she is handed over to the church to be tried for heresy. She is tried, convicted, and sentenced to be burned alive. This sentence, the most revolting on record, is carried out in all its literalness, and in broad daylight, and under the shadow of the Christian cross, and at the very doors of a great cathedral. All this transpired in the city of Rouen, on the thirtieth day of May, fourteen hundred thirty-one.

In order that I may enter into the spirit of the thrilling events of which Rouen was the stage, I repaired to that city, and reverently visited the scenes of the trial and the martyrdom of this latest saint of the Catholic world. Words cannot convey to you the emotions which, like a storm, burst upon me suddenly as the conductor on my train called out, "Rouen!" It was then about a half hour to midnight, and, jumping into a carriage, I was quickly driven to my hotel. What thoughts, and how they crowded in upon me, as soon as I laid my head upon my pillow. My brain was too active to permit of sleep. I imagined I was living in *the year fourteen hundred thirty-one*, and that I had just reached this city on the eve of the martyrdom of Joan. "To-morrow," I whispered to myself, "Joan of Arc will be led to the

stake." Again and again I repeated to my pillow this shuddering intelligence. "What," I exclaimed to myself, "a young woman who saved France by her courage is going to be committed to the flames in this very city *tomorrow!*" I could not believe it possible. I could not believe that there was folly enough, or hatred enough, or stupidity enough, in the world for so desperate a deed. But, alas, it was true. With my eyes closed, I fancied I saw the throngs marching through the streets—consisting of peasants, of merchants, of priests, of princes—to see a girl of nineteen burned in the fire, and in all that throng there was not one who had either a kind word or thought for her—her who had given them a country to live in. Abandoned, hated and spat upon, she was left to suffer the cruelest punishment that human *inhumanity* could devise, or the most perverse imagination invent. A girl of nineteen burned alive! "Oh, God!" The words escaped my lips in spite of me. Then I turned about and called upon *Humanity*. But in the fifteenth century God and Humanity were both hard of hearing. Then I called upon *Science* and *Reason*. But these were not yet born. "There is no help then," I whispered to myself, and my heart swelled within me with indignation, and I became desperate, realizing my helplessness.

With my head upon my pillow during that first night I spent in Rouen, I tried to penetrate into the motives for

the persecution of Joan. This brave girl was feared because she was superior to her age. She provoked the jealousy of her inferiors. Her independence and originality alarmed both the Church and the State. Her ability to take the initiative, and her courage to disagree with her spiritual teachers was a menace to the authority of the priest with the keys, and the king with the sword. The English would not admit that a mere girl, a Domremy peasant, tending her father's cows, could have the genius to whip them—the most powerful warriors of Europe. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, would not forgive Joan for distinguishing herself without their help. For a woman to eclipse the Holy Church and humiliate a powerful State, was a crime punishable by death.

In less than two years' time Joan had saved France, after the prayers of the Church and the armies of the nation had failed ignominiously. In the opinion of the world of that day there was only one power, the devil's, that could outwit the Church. It was not denied that Joan had driven the victorious armies of the enemy out of France, and made a conquered people free again; but it was argued that she had achieved this triumph, not by the help of God, but by the instrumentality of the devil. In those days, anything, however praiseworthy, if accomplished without the permission and coöperation of the Church, was the work of the

devil. Joan had consulted her own heart, instead of the village confessor. That was her heresy. Joan had seen visions and heard voices on her own account. That is the independence which, if encouraged, or even recognized, would overthrow the Catholic Church. No one is allowed to receive revelations at first hand. Even God is not permitted to speak except through his vicar on earth. In short, Joan was a *protestant*, inasmuch as she not only had direct relations with heaven, but she refused to allow the Church to be the judge as to whether her voices were from God or from Satan. During all the agony of her long trial, every effort was made to induce her to allow the Church to be the judge of the nature of her visions. Joan refused the test. There was no doubt about her heresy. She believed herself capable of judging. That was her unpardonable sin.

Still imagining myself in Rouen, in the year fourteen hundred thirty-one, I said to myself, "I must arise early in the morning and go to the old market place to catch a glimpse of the wonderful woman when she leaves the tower for the stake." As the picture of what I would see on the following day arose before my closed eyes, I trembled. "I will not let them burn her," I cried passionately. But, alas, what could one man do against king, pope, and the mob! And I tossed in my bed like one in a cage who is conscious of his helplessness against iron bars.

Suddenly, a thought struck me, as the lightning strikes a tree. "This is fourteen hundred thirty-one," I repeated to myself. "I must get up at once and repair to the palace of the Bishop of Beauvais, the priest who holds in the hollow of his hand the fate of the bravest maid in history. If I could only have a half hour with him," I said, "to pour into his ears my protest, my pleadings, my scorn, my prayers; or, if I could tell him of the time when Joan will have a shrine in a Catholic Church!—he might relent and hearken unto reason?" With these thoughts in my mind I jumped out of my bed, I lit the candle, I put on my clothes. Then, in haste, I walked out into the night, seeking my way in the streets of the strange city now deserted. By the help of the moon and the stars of that night in May, *fourteen hundred thirty-one*, I traced my way to the imposing Cathedral of St. Ouen, standing like a towering shadow in the cold light of the night, and close to which lived the Bishop of Beauvais.

I knocked upon the Bishop's door. "Open, open," I cried, as in the dead of night I kept pounding upon the door. "I wish to come in," I cried. "I wish to save the Church from an indelible stain, I wish to protect the honor of humanity. "Open, open," I cried, again and again, and in the stillness of the night the noise of my blows reached far and wide. Louder and louder still I cried to the Bishop to open the

door. "I wish to rescue France and England from committing an act of infamy; I wish to save history from an unspeakable shame. Let me in, Bishop! I come to protect you against the execration of posterity, against eternal damnation! Open, open the door!" I shouted. I kept pounding upon the door, long and loud, on the eve of that foul day in fourteen hundred thirty-one. I grew impatient with waiting for the door to open, and my voice, which a moment before swept up and down the whole gamut of hope and despair—pleading, shouting, sobbing—now became faint and feeble.

I could not arouse the Bishop. He was fast asleep. Then I was silent myself. Suddenly I heard a far away whisper. It did not come from the Episcopal palace, nor from the Cathedral close by, yet I was sure I heard some one speaking. I listened again. I could now hear more clearly. "I am coming, I am coming," was repeated in caressing accents. "I am coming, to open the door, to awaken the Bishop, to usher in a more joyous day for humanity. I will extinguish the fires of persecution, turn executioners into teachers, disarm superstition, and make the whole world sane. In that day Joan will triumph over her foes and make their churches her mausoleum." It was the voice of Reason! But it took five hundred years for that faint whisper to swell into a mighty chorus, swinging around the globe. That prophecy has been fulfilled, the Bishop's door

opened, and the Church yielded to the clamor of civilization, and changed Joan's stake into the shrine where I lit my candle in her honor, in the Church of the Sacred Heart. She is no longer a heretic, she has become a saint. Her tears have changed into pearls, her tomb into a cathedral, where she sleeps in pomp on the bosom that once stung her to death.

But I was not in Rouen in fourteen hundred thirty-one; I was there five hundred years too late. The day after I arrived in the city, I went to the market place, but, instead of a procession with candles and torches, with stakes and fagots, I found commerce, industry, labor, in full possession of the great square. Prosperous looking men and women met and greeted one another pleasantly; farmers were selling fruit and vegetables; the women, flowers. Even the priests one came across smiled as they saw the happy countenances of the people. What a change! Common sense has sweetened human nature and flooded the mind with the light that destroys superstition and makes all men brothers. The guide pointed out to me the white marble slab marking the spot on which Joan of Arc met her death. "Upon this place stood the stake of Joan of Arc. The ashes of the glorious virgin were thrown into the Seine." This is the inscription on the slab which was placed there by the municipality in eighteen hundred ninety-one.

Close to this same spot the citizens of Rouen have erected

a fountain, in the form of a monument, to the same heroic maiden. I stood and watched the playful waters as they fell with a liquid splash into the marble basin below. Presently, a woman came along with her pitcher. The stake at which Joan of Arc was burned to death has become a fountain, to which the people now come to slake their thirst. Walking up to the woman, I said, "What fountain is this?" "Ah, monsieur," she exclaimed, "behold the fountain of Joan of Arc." "But she was a heretic," I remarked. I can never forget her smile. The sun had arisen in her eyes. "We live in the twentieth century," she replied. And, unconsciously, we both heaved a sigh of relief. I rubbed my eyes to be sure we were not living in the middle ages, when Rationalism was still a babe in swaddling clothes, and Theology was lord of all. This is the twentieth century—for we are drinking at the fountain of Joan of Arc instead of carrying fagots to her stake! One of the sunniest spots in my memory will be my meeting with this peasant woman, with her pitcher, at the fountain of Joan of Arc.

But my object in this lecture is to help clear some obscure questions in connection with the trial, martyrdom and subsequent canonization of this girl of nineteen. I wish to bring about a more intelligent appreciation of the story of a young shepherdess, beginning from the day she left her home in Domremy, to the fiery scaffold; and thence to a place among

the saints in the Catholic calendar. This is the only instance in Catholic history of a person once destroyed as a heretic who has afterwards received the highest honors within the gift of the Church. In fourteen hundred thirty-one an infallible body of ecclesiastics pronounced this young woman to be "a child of perdition, a sorceress, a seducer, a harlot and a heretic." Five hundred years after, another infallible body of ecclesiastics belonging to the same church pronounced the same "harlot" and "heretic" to be 'angelic' and "divine." One infallible pope allowed her to be burned in fourteen hundred thirty-one; another infallible pope denounced her murderers as detestable criminals—which shows how fallible is infallibility.

A great many untruths are being circulated to help clear this contradiction. The clergy are proclaiming from the housetops that it was not the church that tried and condemned Joan of Arc to torture and death in fourteen hundred thirty-one; on the contrary, it was the church, they say, which has just vindicated her memory and beatified her with superb ceremonies. History, however, gives a different version of the affair. Before proceeding to describe the trial and condemnation of Joan of Arc, let me state the attitude of the Rationalist toward Joan of Arc's claims to inspiration. We can do justice to a woman of her description without believing in miraculous predictions. Joan of Arc claimed

to have seen visions and to have heard voices, which assured her of her divine mission. She was thirteen years of age, according to her testimony, when she felt her first thrill. The visions were repeated. One day, at about noon, in the summer time, and while working on her father's farm, close to the whispering trees, she saw a radiance out of which came a voice which she fancied was the voice of an angel or of a saint. It was not at all strange that she should hear voices. All her education had prepared her for them. She had been told how others had seen angels and heard voices. The literature of the Church was full of the miraculous in those days. It was the ambition of every believer to receive visits from the other world, and to be told secrets. Joan, the little Domremy girl, shared these ambitions. In her case the wish was father to the vision. She heard the voices and saw the faces which her heart coveted. How do we explain her "voices" and her "visions"? The question is a very simple one, unless we have a leaning for theology. The voices that Joan heard were those that came from her own heart. It was her own dreams she saw in the sunlight.

The young woman had mused over the acts of brigandage of the invading army and their French allies; she had seen the smoke of the burning villages and had heard the wail of her peasant neighbors. The distress of her people had often melted her into tears and wrung many a sigh from

her lips. She imagined the whole country summoning her to the rescue. So earnest was she that her thoughts assumed form and shape, and became vocal. Thus, out of the substance of her own soul she fashioned the visions which she beheld. She felt herself set apart to be the saviour of France. The brilliance of that thought darkened every other object in life—home, parents, money, marriage!

To those who will not be satisfied with this explanation, I beg to say that if the voices were really supernatural, then they should be held responsible for the cruel death to which they led or drove the young woman. Why did her voices, if they were divine, desert her when she needed their help most? Why did they not save her from prison and the stake? And which of us would like to be guided to the chambers of the inquisition, and the flames of the stake by "heavenly voices"? Moreover, if these voices came from God, why did they not speak to the English king, or to the Roman pope, in behalf of Joan, when she called on them for help? Why did they not assume the responsibility for the acts for which she was destroyed? Voices and visions which induce a young girl to go to the help of a perishing country only to use her victories for the benefit of a depraved and imbecile prince like Charles VII, and desert the young woman herself to be "done" to death! Defend us against them!

Returning to the question of the responsibility of the Catholic Church for the fate of Joan, there are these points to be touched upon. Being a matter of history that on the last day of May, fourteen hundred thirty-one, this young woman was publicly burned in the City of Rouen, in the square of the cathedral, the question arises: Who put her to death? Another important question is: Why was she put to death? And when we have answered these questions we will be in a position to discuss the much more important question of: Why Joan of Arc was recently translated into a saint by the pope.

Twenty-five years after the burning of Joan, when the city of Rouen was restored to the French king, and the English were finally driven across the Channel, it was decided to review the evidence upon which the Maid had been convicted and put to death. This was done; and with the result that she was acquitted of all the charges of heresy, insubordination to the Church, adultery, witchcraft, etc. What do you think was the motive of this revision? The French king had begun to realize the disgrace to which he had been exposed by the condemnation of the Maid as a witch. Being exceedingly pious—piety and crime were united in him as in many others of that day—he was tormented by the thought that the young woman who had assisted him in his war against the English, and had been the means of securing for him the crown of France, and had also officiated

at his coronation in the cathedral of Rheims, was condemned as an agent of satan by the Church; which, if true, it would make him not only the target for the ridicule and derision of the whole Christian world, but, also, an illicit king of the French, who might refuse their allegiance to him because he was made king by a witch and not by an apostle of God. It is no wonder that a superstitious man like Charles VII, in a superstitious age, trembled, not only for his crown, but, also, for his life. Therefore, in order to make his succession legitimate it was necessary to prove that Joan was not a witch, but a true messenger of God. For if Joan was a witch, Charles VII was not king "by the grace of God," but by a trick of the devil. In self-defense the king of France was not only compelled to reopen the case against Joan, now that he was free from English dictation, but he also indicated in advance to the ecclesiastics the conclusion they would have to arrive at. The king could not have allowed, and he would not have allowed, the ecclesiastical council, convened at his request, to arrive at any other verdict than the one which would prove to France and Christendom that he was made king at Rheims, not by a witch who was excommunicated by the Church and flung into the fire, but by a real and inspired apostle of God.

Of course, it is a matter of history that it was by the help of Joan that Charles VII became King of France.

As already intimated, at the coronation ceremony Joan was not only present, but she assisted the Archbishop when the latter placed the crown upon the king's head. The inauguration was practically the work of Joan. It was the fulfillment of a prediction she had repeatedly made, that she would conquer the English and crown the French king in the City of Rheims. If she was a witch the coronation was invalid. The ceremony of the anointing of a king is one of the most solemn in the Catholic Church. The condemnation of Joan as a witch had not only stripped this ceremony of its sacredness, but it had also made it null and void, nay, more, a blasphemy. How could a king, anointed by the help of a witch, be the king of a Christian nation? To appreciate this argument we must remember how bigoted the people were in the Middle Ages. In self-defense, therefore, Charles VII was compelled to prove to the French, and to the whole world, that the woman to whom he owed his elevation to the throne was not a heretic.

Let us recapitulate. The King of France ordered the Church to make out a new certificate for Joan. The Church obeyed the French king, even as the same Church twenty-five years earlier had obeyed the King of England and condemned Joan to death. When the English were masters of France, the Catholic Church pleased them by delivering up the conqueror of England to be burned alive; when the

English were driven out of the country and the French were again in control this sentence was reversed and Joan was proven to have been a dutiful child of the Church. Thus it will be seen that the Church swung with the English when the English ruled the land, and she swung with the French when the French had driven the English out of the country. The Church was with England at one time, and she was with France at another—but never with Joan. I am milder in my criticism than the facts warrant. I am making strenuous efforts to speak with moderation of an “infallible institution.”

But why was it to the interest of the English to have Joan declared a witch? Their motives were as personal as those of the French king. The English felt humiliated to think that a mere woman had whipped them, and therefore they were determined to prove that she was more than a woman—an agent of the devil. There was no secret about this. Their motive was very plain. It was to their interest to show that Joan was the personification of satan, and that consequently the English should not be blamed for running away from her presence, because who could withstand the devil? The English army did not go down before a girl, but before a sorceress. Even as the King of France did not wish it said that he owed his victory over the English to a witch, or that he was made king by an apostate, the English did not

wish it said that they were conquered by a saint, for that would make God the enemy of the English. One king wanted Joan damned, and the Church accommodated him by damning her; another wanted Joan beatified, and the Church beatified her.

It is admitted that the English could not have burned Joan as a witch without the consent of the Church. They could have burned her as a prisoner, but that would not have answered their purpose—she must be declared a witch in order to vindicate the *amour propre* of the English people. It is the exclusive prerogative of the Church to decide questions of orthodoxy or heresy. No king has the right to admit or exclude any one from the communion of the Church. Whether or not Joan was a witch was a theological question and could only be decided by the ecclesiastical court. Neither could the King of France declare Joan of Arc innocent of heresy without the consent of the Church. It follows then that the principal actor in the trial, the condemnation and the death of the young woman under the English, and her subsequent vindication and beatification, was the Church of Rome, since without its consent the English could not have made a heretic of her, nor the French a saviour and a saint. A secular government may declare who shall be its military heroes, or who shall be court-martialed and disgraced, but only the Church enjoys the right to damn or to

canonize. This point is so clinching that even the most zealous papist must admit that at one time, when all Europe was Catholic—England as much so as France—and the pope was as supreme in one country as in the other, a girl of nineteen, who had rendered heroic services to her oppressed country, could not have been declared a heretic and cast into the fire at the door of a cathedral, in the presence of bishops, priests, a cardinal and a representative of the holy Inquisition, without the knowledge and consent of the Holy Roman Catholic Church.

An attempt has been made to throw the entire blame of the proceedings against Joan of Arc upon the English. There is no doubt about the anxiety of the English to punish the Maid who had robbed them of the spoils of their victory over the French and brought dishonor upon their arms. But a mere military punishment, as already intimated, would not have been sufficient to satisfy the English—she had to be excommunicated from Christendom as one possessed of the devil. That was the only way to save the English of the disgrace of having been beaten by a woman, and the records show that the Church, instead of reluctantly carrying out the wishes of the English, was more than pleased to bring Joan to the stake. Letters were written from the office of the Inquisition to the English king, complaining against his lukewarmness in the matter of prose-

cuting the young woman. The Catholic University of Paris, also, sent a special communication to King Henry of England to remind him of his duty to help the Church to put down heresy. The English were urged to hand Joan over to the bishop and the Inquisition, that the ecclesiastics might proceed with her trial without delay. And when finally Joan faced her judges, forty in number, every one of them was an ecclesiastic, and out of the forty, thirty-eight were Frenchmen.

Moreover, the Archbishop of Rheims, who was also Chancellor of France, wrote a letter which is still in existence, in which he congratulated the French upon the capture of Joan of Arc, whom he denounces as a heretic—"a proud and rebellious child who refuses to submit to the Church." Being the superior of the Bishop of Beauvais, who was in charge of the trial, the Archbishop could have stopped the prosecution if he had the least sympathy or pity for the Maid. But to try to save a heretic would be the worst kind of heresy. That explains the utter desertion of Joan by all France—people, priest and king.

In this connection a comparison should be made between the zeal of the clergy to bring Joan to trial for heresy and the slowness and indifference with which the Church proceeded to obey the summons of the King of France twenty-five years after to reinstate her into the fellowship of Cath-

olic Christendom. The records show that it required considerable urging and manœuvring on the part of the French government to bring about a revision of the ecclesiastical sentence against the Maid. As long as Nicholas V was pope nothing was accomplished. The case was reopened under Pope Calixtus. Not until it was realized that further delay in the matter would greatly irritate, not only the French king, but also the populace, now freed from English dominion and seeking to live down the evil reputation of having harbored an apostate in their midst, did Rome stir itself in the matter. It will be seen that it was not the pope nor the Church that took the initiative in behalf of Joan of Arc. The Church only yielded to the pressure from the State, that had now become powerful. Had the English remained in control of France the Maid of Orleans would never have been remembered by the Catholic Church, much less restored to honor and immortality.

“We do not deny,” answer the defenders of the Church, “that *some* bishops and even cardinals persecuted Joan of Arc to death. But is it just to hold the whole Church responsible for the crime of an insignificant minority?” This is the main defense of the Catholics against the arguments of the Rationalists and the facts of history. Be it noted that I am not trying to abuse the Catholics; I am only sorry that they should be unwilling, even at this date, to say, “We

are sorry." To commit mistakes is human. But why should the Church move heaven and earth to prove that it has never committed a mistake? The attempt is also made to prove that the ecclesiastics who are responsible for the death of Joan were wicked men and have been repudiated by the Church. To this is added the further defense that it was the gold of the English which corrupted these priests. But such a defense, I regret to say, does not reflect credit upon the intelligence or the honor of the Church of Rome. In this day of general information it is impossible for anyone to wrap up the facts of history in a napkin, as it were, and put them away where no one may have access to them. The judges of Joan were all ordained ministers of the Church. The presiding priest was a bishop—the bishop of Beauvais. He was assisted by a cardinal, a vice-president of the Inquisition, and a number of other ecclesiastics who were connected with the University of Paris. Is it reasonable to suppose that the Inquisition and the Catholic University of Paris, and all the clergy of England and France represented only a discredited section of the Church?

It is the pride of the Catholics that their church has never been divided or schismatic, and that it has been one and indivisible "always and everywhere." How is this claim to be reconciled with the excuse that a considerable portion of the Catholic Church in the fifteenth century openly

ignored the authority of the pope and did as they pleased without incurring the displeasure of the Hierarchy for their insubordination? Furthermore, if only a part of the church persecuted the young woman, what did the rest of the church do to save her? We would like the names of the priests who interceded in her behalf. It does not give me a bit of pleasure to prove the Catholic Church responsible for this as for many other burnings at the stake, but it gives me pleasure to be able to show that any institution claiming infallibility, to defend that claim must persecute. And why do I take pleasure in proving this to be inevitable? It might open the eyes of the religious world to the danger of supernaturalism. If the Christians no longer burn people they do not like, it is not because their Bibles have been altered, but because they no longer believe in them as they used to. It is good news to report that supernaturalism is waning, for it means the progress of science and sanity.

There is still another point to be touched upon: When all Europe heard of the fate that had befallen a girl of nineteen through the machinations, let us say, of a few naughty Catholic priests—what did Rome do to these same priests who had so disgraced their “holy” profession, as well as brought lasting shame upon civilization? Is not this a pertinent question? Joan’s trial lasted for four months. Not only France and England, but all Christendom was

interested in the outcome. During all this time not only was there not a word of protest from Rome, but what is more significant, shortly after the trial and condemnation of Joan, the pope rewarded her accusers and persucutors with ecclesiastical promotion. Again, I must hasten to explain that I am not interested in embarrassing the Catholics; my point is to strike at *dogma*—which turns hearts into stone, and makes of the intellect a juggler's instrument. Joan was sacrificed, nay,—the honor of France, of Europe, of civilization, of humanity—was flung into the fire with Joan, to save—what? Dogma!

Not only did the church fail to punish a single one of the forty ecclesiastics who tried Joan, not to mention hundreds of others who coöperated with them to bring about her destruction, but, as intended, gifts were conferred upon the principal actors in this awful drama. Roussel, one of the ecclesiastics who figured prominently in the proceedings, was given the archepiscopacy of the city of Rouen—the very city in which a girl not yet twenty, and who had served France on the battlefield, and brought victory to her flag, was beaten and burnt to death. Pasquier, an ordinary priest when he was serving as one of the judges, was made a bishop after the execution of Joan. Two others, Gilles and Le Fevre, were also advanced to upper ranks in the church. Thomas Courcelles, one of the most merciless judges of Joan—who

voted in favor of subjecting the prisoner to physical torture to compel her to admit she was a witch—this priest with the unenviable reputation was also promoted to a lucrative post in the famous church of *Notre Dame*, in Paris. Finally, the man who engineered the trial, who presided over the sessions, and to whom Joan said, “You are the cause of my misfortunes”—the Bishop of Beauvais, the man whom all Catholics justly execrate today—even he was rewarded by the “Holy Father”; he was given the episcopal seat of Lisieux. Does it look as though the crime against Joan were the work of a discredited minority in the Catholic Church? I repeat, it was dogma, it was revelation, it was infallibility, it was supernaturalism, and not this or that priest—that should be held guilty.

To meet these arguments the Catholic apologists call attention to the fact that the church “has a horror of blood,” and that it has never put anyone to death for any cause whatever. But this is true only in a Pickwickian sense. It is like the head saying to the hands, “I have never committed the least violence against anyone.” The hands, it is evident, commit the acts, but whose hands are they? The hands only obey the head, and for the head to blame the hands for carrying out its orders, realizing its thoughts and wishes, would not even be amusing, much less convincing. It is the judge, or the court, that takes the life of the culprit,

for instance, and not the executioner. The Catholic Church demands the death of the heretic. Is this denied? Read Thomas Aquinas, the most honored saint and theologian of Catholicism; read the decrees of the general councils of the church and the encyclicals of St. Peter's successors, and a thousand, thousand proofs will be found in them to substantiate the statement. It is the Bible that commands the death of the heretic. No church founded on the Bible can afford to be tolerant. The theory of Christianity as well as of Mohammedanism is that the sword which the king carries has been blessed and put in his hands that he may put down the heretics. The civil authorities then, in bringing Joan of Arc to the fire were carrying out the instructions of the forty ecclesiastical judges who condemned her to death. Had these judges found her innocent, the state could not have destroyed her life; it was the will of the priestly court that she should die, and the secular authorities fulfilled its wish.

But was Joan a heretic? Strenuous efforts are made to show that she was not. This point is a vital one. The church, in self-defense, is bound to produce arguments to prove that Joan of Arc was an orthodox, obedient, and submissive child of the church. If she was not orthodox, then the church has sainted a heretic in the person of Joan of Arc. One of the questions they asked her at the trial was

whether she would be willing to submit the question of her "visions" to the church; that is to say, would she consent to the findings of an ecclesiastical court concerning herself and her mission? To this the answer was that she held herself responsible only to God. This was considered a rebellious answer, and it was—from the church's point of view. According to Catholic theology the church is divided into two branches,—the church militant, which is composed of the pope, the priests and their flock; and the church triumphant, which is presided over by God and the saints in glory. Joan said she was prepared to submit to the church triumphant—the church on high, that is to say, to God, but to nobody else. This also was a heresy. Her clerical judges insisted that to be a good Catholic she must bow to the will of the church on earth—the pope and his representatives. Her heresy then was both real and serious. She appealed from the pope to God. She placed her own conscience above the authority of the church. She believed in private judgment, the exercise of which is forbidden by the church. In refusing to let the pope act as the middleman between God and herself she was threatening the very existence of the papacy. There is then no doubt that both by her independent conduct and by her original answers Joan attacked the very fundamentals of Catholicism. It follows, then, that the pope a few years ago made a saint out of a heretic.

Although Joan was an uncultivated girl, able neither to read nor write, she was gifted with good common sense. She saw at a glance that if she were to submit to the church she would thereby be casting doubts upon the genuineness of her "visions." She preferred to go to the stake rather than do that. She was really between two fires: the priests threatened her body; God in her conscience threatened her soul. She decided to obey the voice within. The decision cost her her life.

Some of the questions put to her and the answers which Joan made are really remarkable. They show the craft of her judges, on the one hand, and the courage and common sense of the victim, on the other.

"Will you not submit to our holy father, the Pope?" they asked her. "Bring me before the Pope, and I will answer," she replied. In other words, they were trying to have her admit that she had no right to think for herself or to exercise any independence at all. But she was too serious and earnest a person to subscribe to any such doctrine. She had never understood that to be a Catholic meant to be a bondswoman. "Take care," she said, turning her fiery glance upon her inquisitors, "take care that you do not put yourselves in the place of God." By such an answer, the young woman, still in her 'teens, had shot the Catholic Church in the heart.

The nature of the charges against Joan as formulated by her judges also goes to prove that she was considered a heretic and condemned to death for that offense. The eleventh charge against her reads: "She has adored her saints without taking clerical advice." Charge twelfth reads: "She refuses to submit her conduct and revelation to the church." When asked if she would obey the church, her reply was, "God first being served." Luther said no more than that—and the Catholic church was split in two. Everything goes to show that the Domremy peasant girl was a private thinker, that is to say, a heretic. Listen to this: "I will believe that our Holy Father, the pope of Rome and the bishops and other churchmen are for the guarding of the Christian faith and the punishment of heretics, *but as for me and my facts, I will only submit to the church of heaven.*" To be sure that is insubordination; it is placing herself not only on an equality with the pope, but even above him. Of course, Joan was not a Rationalist—far from it—but she was an independent Catholic—that is to say—not subject to the church—and that is heresy. Is it any wonder that her sentence read: "Therefore we pronounce you a rotten limb, and as such to be lopped off from the church." And the reason this sentence gave satisfaction to the Catholics all over the world was because such initiative and self-respect as Joan had manifested, if tolerated, would

bring about the collapse of the infallible authority of the church. The University of Paris wrote to the pope, to the king of England and the bishops, lauding the priests who had purged the church of this dangerous girl with her "I think so," or "I believe so,"—with the emphasis on the "I." In this same letter the Bishop of Beauvais, the evil genius of Joan, to whom she said, when she saw the stake awaiting her, "Bishop, I die through you!" is commended for "his great gravity and holy way of proceeding, which ought to be most satisfactory to all."

It took five hundred years for the Catholic Church to discover that the young woman burnt as a heretic was really a saint. But the church did not make this discovery until modern thought, benign and brave, had taken the outcast girl under its protection. The French nation had already made a national heroine of her, when the Vatican decided to enroll her name among the hallowed ones in its calendar. The beatification of Joan was brought about ostensibly by the report that certain sufferers from cancer, and other incurable maladies, had been completely cured by praying to Joan of Arc for help. The Maid had become a miracle worker, and hence worthy to receive a medal, as it were, from the pope. Joan is now a new income as well as a saint.

Joan owes her Vindication to the Rationalists of France. The man in recent years whose books, position

and influence did more than anything else to bring about a new attitude toward Joan of Arc, was Marcelin Berthelot, who now sleeps in the Pantheon as one of the glories of his country. A few years ago, I received an invitation to visit him at Bellevue near Paris. To give you an idea of the great man who did so much to rejuvenate Europe and throw its whole weight on the side of justice to the Martyr—woman of France. I shall reproduce in this connection what I said about him after my interview with him:

“Who are the Rationalists?” is one of the questions frequently asked. Well, they are the intellectual leaders of the world, as what I learned about Berthelot clearly shows. He was the man upon whom two European sovereigns had conferred the highest decorations in their power for services rendered to human progress,—whom his own countrymen had honored by making him a senator for life; who twice had been appointed minister of foreign affairs; who had been elected an honorary member of all the scientific associations of the world; upon whom the Royal Scientific Society of London has bestowed its most coveted honors; who is the perpetual secretary of the Academy of Science of Paris; a member of the Academy Francaise, and, therefore, one of the immortals; and whose volumes, inventions, discoveries and contributions have placed modern civilization under inex-

pressible obligations to him. With all these dignities and titles, richly deserved, M. Berthelot is as gracious in his manners, as unassuming, as childlike and modest, as one could desire. He displays all the charms of the real man of worth—the man of genius.

Though in his seventy-sixth year, the sage and diplomat still possessed the vigor of a man of fifty, pursuing his studies and interesting himself in the politics of his time, with the ardor and fervor of youth. The accumulation of his years and his indefatigable labors had by no means impaired the faculties of his mind, being still regarded by his countrymen as one of the most fertile brains and sanest intellects of modern Europe.

Two years previously all France, one might say, had met in Paris to celebrate at the Sorbonne the completion of Berthelot's fifty years of intellectual labor. It was on this occasion that the foreign potentates sent their delegates and decorations to him. Every civilized country was represented at the festivities by its foremost men of letters and diplomats, while all the senators of France, the president of the republic, the members of his cabinet, and all the heads of the colleges were assembled to applaud the *master* whose half a century of study and service had so greatly augmented the horizon of man and increased the light of the world.

When this distinguished scientist was admitted into the

French Academy, Jules Lemaitre, in his address of welcome, declared that Berthelot was the real creator of the modern industrial era, which had multiplied the resources of man a hundredfold. He called Berthelot the discoverer of modern chemistry, which has in so short a time transformed the face of the earth, and which holds the secret of the solution of the social and economic problems of the day. “‘Chemistry’ declares Berthelot, “ ‘is a new gospel, which brings tidings of great power to mankind.’ ” It will put an end to the cruel struggle of classes, and make of warlike politics, now one of the scourges of nations, a lost art. It will do this by placing within the reach of all an inexhaustible wealth of food and raiment, thereby curing man forever of the disease of discontent.”

“There are only two things worth living for,” said M. Berthelot, in an address at the Palais de Trocadero before six thousand Frenchmen—“the love of truth and the love of one’s fellows.”

That *love of truth* opened for Joan the doors of the Catholic Church, shut against her five hundred years ago and it opened to Berthelot the doors of the Pantheon—the Temple of the Immortals!

A final word. I have as much compassion and sympathy for the Catholics as I have for the martyred girl—indeed more, since they need more. Joan has been vin-

licated by the broader and more benign thought of this age. The same serene and sweet power will transform the Catholic Church and make it one of the most progressive forces of our America. I have delivered this lecture to hasten that lovely day!

Rajesh Arya

